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ABSTRACT

The booklet presents guidelines for program development which resulted from Project CHILD, a research effort to validate identification, intervention, and teacher education programs for use with language handicapped children. School districts engaged in developing and implementing a language disability program are encouraged to consider the following areas: needs assessment, eligibility, evaluation, staff development, physical facilities, community involvement, public relations, and fiscal management. (DB)

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Programming for the Language Disabled Child

Booklet V

ED100109

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

GUIDELINES FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Project CHILD
Texas Education Agency
Austin, Texas

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INTRODUCTION

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Guidelines discussed in this document reflect the findings and experiences of Project CHILD. Eight major areas have been identified which a school district should consider in the development and implementation of a language disability program. These areas are (1) needs assessment, (2) eligibility, (3) evaluation, (4) staff development, (5) physical facilities, (6) community involvement, (7) public relations, and (8) fiscal management.

Texas Education Agency Bulletin 711, Administrative Guide and Handbook for Special Education, places emphasis on two of these areas, needs assessment and evaluation, with its requirement that each school district applying for special education funds develop a *comprehensive plan.* Guidelines for planning and evaluation of Special Education services may be obtained and used by local school districts from the Department of Special Education, Texas Education Agency.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Needs assessment should be a local district's first step in construction of a comprehensive plan. The following guidelines and policies are considered basic to development and implementation of a needs assessment program:

1. Establish a broad-based committee for planning and implementation of the Language Disability Program. This committee should include parents, teachers, administrators, school board, regional service center representatives, and medical personnel.

2. Identify populations and sub-populations which have concerns regarding establishment of a Language Disability Program. Ordinarily this would include as a minimum the following populations:

   A. Parents
   B. Community organizations
   C. Education community
   D. Business community
   E. Medical personnel

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3. Screen the school population to determine the number of L/LD students needing special services. Use screening methods as outlined in Booklet One entitled Screening.

4. Establish learner goals. (Example: Each student identified as having a language disability will be able to read at a level commensurate with his individual intellectual functioning level after a maximum of two years in the L/LD Program.)

5. Develop needs assessment instrumentation based on identified learner goals and appropriate to the population and sub-populations to be contacted.

6. Establish goal priorities through use of instrumentation allowing population surveyed to rank goals.

7. Develop performance objectives for each learner goal.

8. Develop educational program designed to meet priority needs identified.

EVALUATION

The last two guidelines listed above provide the baseline data for the second major part of a comprehensive plan — evaluation. Given an educational program based on performance objectives, evaluation becomes a natural and systematic process.

Performance objectives, which provide for proficiency levels, form the basic structure for evaluation. Good examples of performance objectives as well as a discussion of their development can be found in Ten Kit 1, Project CHILD CHILD publication.[1]

Using the proficiency levels established by the performance objectives as a baseline, the evaluation process should observe the following guidelines:

1. All segments of the educational program which are to be evaluated should be identified. At a minimum this should include:

   A. Learner outcomes
   B. Instructional personnel
   C. Facilities
   D. Costs

[1] Ten Kit 1, Dr. Steve Hale.

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2. Process objectives should be established to supplement performance objectives and to aid in management.

3. Provision should be made for systematic recycling and appropriate revision of goals, program, etc.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Staff development is a particularly critical area to be considered in the planning and implementation of a language disability program. There is now a shortage of adequately trained personnel in this field, and the short-range forecast offers little promise that this situation will be alleviated in the next few years. It may, in fact, get worse. Bearing this in mind, local school districts should give special thought and study to ways in which they may upgrade the skills of their staffs through in-service programs.

While there are obviously a variety of ways in which teachers may obtain necessary competencies, it is very important that the administrator have a good understanding of those competencies as he makes his plans for staff development. A set of teacher competencies specific to the language disability field has been identified by Project CHILD, and a list of those competencies can be found in Booklet II, Essential Professional Skills, of this series.

In developing ways in which to secure the most efficient and effective acquisition of these competencies, the following guidelines should be helpful.

1. A survey of currently employed personnel should be carefully made to determine which staff members can be most easily brought to desired proficiency levels.

2. An assessment of local staff members should be made to ascertain potential for local leadership of a staff development program.

3. Wherever possible, local resources should be utilized for training.

4. Assistance from Texas Education Agency, Division of Special Education should be requested.

5. The knowledge and expertise of the local regional service center should be utilized in program planning.

6. Appropriate staff members should be involved in program development from planning through evaluation.

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7. Programs should be selected which include pre-tests which will prevent staff members from having to repeat work in areas in which they have already attained competency.

8. Emphasis should be placed on competency rather than semester hours "per se".

9. The staff development program should be made a high priority endeavor by adequate administrative involvement, proper physical facilities, and recognition of participants.

10. The training should be made attractive to the staff by offering incentives, scheduling at convenient times, and making available best possible facilities.

PLACEMENT

Texas Education Agency *Bulletin 711,* in addition to offering general directives for determining pupil eligibility, lists the following specific eligibility criteria for L/LD Programs:

"1. Written report of assessment showing total intellectual functioning not more than two standard deviation units below the norm.

2. A written report of assessment revealing evidence of a deficit or deficits in one or more of the basic psychological learning processes of auditory, visual, or haptic processing, inter-sensory integration, and/or concept formation.

3. A written report of educational assessment substantiating a discrepancy between age level expectancy and current educational performance. This criterion may not necessarily apply to pupils ages 3 through 5 years of age.

4. Documented evidence must be offered to indicate that the child's learning style deviates so markedly from the norm of his age group that he requires special education intervention.

5. Physician's written report of general medical evaluation."[2]

In addition to these official criteria, the following guidelines may be helpful in this aspect of a developing language disability program:

[2] Texas Education Agency, *Administrative Guide and Handbook for Special Education*, Bulletin 711, 1973, page 10.

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1. The services of the Special Education Department of the Regional Service Center should be utilized for consultant help in establishing placement procedures.
2. Texas Education Agency clarification should be requested on any directive which is not understood. Operational procedures and guidelines have been developed for each directive.
3. A definite role for parents should be created in the placement process and a systematic way for securing parental involvement should be established.
4. Information concerning current litigation in the area of special education placement should be obtained from the Regional Service Center.
5. A systematic, planned system for returning children to mainstream education is just as important as a system for placing them in special programs.

PHYSICAL FACILITIES

These guidelines are recommended in planning for the physical facilities requisite to a successful L/LD program:

1. Wherever possible, let the program dictate the facilities.
2. Do not make special education students "second-class citizens" by placing them in "second-class" facilities.
3. Remember that both layman and professional often judge the value of a program by its physical setting. The value of the language disability program, should be demonstrated to your community by "showcasing" it in the best available facilities.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Texas Education Agency *Bulletin 711* states that "each school district operating a special education program shall develop and adopt local policies relating to cooperation with and permission from the parents or guardians of exceptional children." This should represent the very minimum acceptable level of community involvement. Every effort should be extended to broaden the base of community involvement and support. These guidelines are recommended to the administrator seeking to achieve broad community involvement in a developing language disability program:

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1. Utilize all civic organizations in your community. Not all will accept active involvement, but all should have an equal opportunity for involvement.
2. Give particular attention to the involvement of parent-teacher groups and of local associations for children with learning disabilities.
3. Remember that the key to community support is community involvement and that the key to community involvement is a good program for informing the community.
4. Do not limit community involvement to any phase of program development. Rather seek involvement from planning through evaluation.
5. Give particular attention to identifying and giving involvement opportunities to concerned professionals outside the school community.
6. Consider developing a volunteer-tutor program to augment the instructional program and provide for active involvement of the community. (Guidelines for developing such a program may be found in "Project CHILD – The Intervention Models.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

An effective public relations effort is essential to the successful implementation of a language disability program. The general public tends to equate special education with mental retardation, and this creates a stigma which must be overcome if a language disability program is to meet with community acceptance. The following guidelines are recommended:

1. Utilize every means and media available to "tell the L/LD story."
2. View the task as basically educational and develop public relations objectives accordingly.
3. Identify specific publics to be reached and develop plans specific to each.
4. Avoid use of highly technical or medical terminology. (A "learning prescription" conveys the idea of deficiency – a "learning plan" does not.)
5. Be honest with the public. Avoid glowing reports or promises which might not be met.

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6. Develop ways to utilize the two greatest assets, the students and the teachers.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS

Fiscal considerations often shape instructional programs. This is not necessarily a bad situation, if the process is one of developing an integrated program within given financial limits. If, however, consideration of fiscal restraints is not a part of planning from the outset, then the program will be in danger of "amputations" as funding limitations become evident. This latter situation is not uncommon, and districts must avoid drifting into this problem.

These guidelines can help in this area of concern:

1. Know exactly the funding limitations for the program. L/LD funding provisions are discussed on pages 40-43 and 49-51 of the Texas Education Agency publication, *Administrative Guide and Handbook for Special Education*, Bulletin 711, 1973.

2. Consider the use of para-professionals to extend the influence and effect of the professional staff.

3. Weigh the relative cost and effectiveness of the integrated classroom as opposed to the resource room. (Project CHILD's integrated classroom – 13 regular and 12 L/LD students – is described in *Project CHILD, The Intervention Models.*)

4. Develop cost-effectiveness systems as part of the total evaluation program.

5. Seek ways to cooperate with other districts to extend the buying power and to get more for the staff development and consultant dollar.

6. Fully utilize services made available by the Texas Education Agency and by the local Regional Education Service Center.